



The Hon David Bradbury MP

FEDERAL MEMBER FOR LINDSAY

Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer

10 February 2011

CONDOLENCES

Australian Natural Disasters

Mr BRADBURY (Lindsay) (Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer) (12.07pm)

We have begun yet another parliamentary year with the spectre of tragedy and a pall of grief hanging over our deliberations. Only two years ago we stood in this place reflecting on the devastation of the Black Saturday fires. With those tragic stories still in our minds, we now confront the destruction wreaked by floods and fires across this nation. The natural disasters of the summer, particularly in Queensland, northern New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia, have underlined both the harsh brutality of the Australian landscape and the inherent compassion and generosity of the Australian people. Even for those communities who were far removed from the events in Queensland and the other regions that were most badly affected by flood and fire, these were disasters that struck a blow at all of us as a nation.

Like most Australians I watched as great swathes of Queensland and Victoria were submerged by floodwaters, and we have seen homes burn in Western Australia. I heard the stories of those who did not survive or those whose loved ones were swept away or lost to fire. It has been a summer of extraordinary catastrophes that seemed to cascade one on top of the other, and with each expression of natural force came more homes, more property, more businesses destroyed, more lives lost. The tragedies of this summer will linger in our collective memories for many decades to come. For those who lived and survived these tragedies I can barely begin to imagine the horror that they have faced or the dark days that are still to come.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the many fine contributions to this condolence motion. In particular I wish to acknowledge those members who have spoken with such force about their own personal circumstances, who have spoken with force about the impact of these natural disasters on their communities. It is in moments such as these that we see the great power of representative democracy, where individuals can come forward and not just advocate for the interests or the demands of the communities that they represent but reflect and amplify the feeling, the loss, the suffering, but also the hope, of their communities.

I can stand here today with the great fortune of not having been personally affected by these tragedies but, as I said earlier, I think as Australians we have all been greatly affected by what we have seen. But I do stand here today to ensure that it is recorded in the Hansard that the people of my community, in the Lindsay electorate, wish to acknowledge that they too grieve and wish to show their compassion and empathy towards those who have been affected by these events. My community is divided by the mighty Nepean River, part of the Hawkesbury-Nepean catchment. With the Nepean River running through the heart of our electorate, ours is a community that is no stranger to flooding; indeed, much of the electorate of Lindsay is located on the flood plain. I have no doubt that that is in the minds of those locals who remember the flood events our community has experienced in the past and that is why so many members of my community have mobilised to contribute, to raise funds and to show their expressions of support for those who have been affected by these natural events.

I wish to take a few moments now to record just a few examples of some of the individuals and groups in my community that have made a contribution to the collective national fundraising effort and to the collective national effort of extending sympathy and assistance to those in need. I wish to acknowledge the 10 Penrith Panthers players who travelled to Ipswich to help out with the recovery. Captain Petero Civoniceva has a special connection with Ipswich, having played as a junior in the district. He told our local paper, the Penrith Press:

I just don't think the vision of the floods we saw on television gave it justice. It was just utter devastation and for two days we helped people in any way we could. We just moved from house to house offering our help, and ended up with shovels and wheelbarrows on the first day and knocking out gyprock walls and ceilings on the other.

It just really made me think if this had happened to me what I would do.

I think that for Australians, as we spent summer, the time that so many of us enjoy spending with our families, as we looked on, that was a question we all asked ourselves: 'What would I do if this happened to me?'

I also wish to acknowledge local entertainers who teamed up with the many clubs, pubs and restaurants in my local community that hosted and held fundraising events, some of which included the Penrith Paceway, the Penrith RSL and the Log Cabin. I also acknowledge the Red Cross volunteers in my local community who have worked tirelessly to raise funds for the relief effort. In particular, I acknowledge those women who were involved on Australia Day, battling what was oppressive heat in Penrith, out at the Penrith Lakes walking around with their tins, raising money for this cause. I acknowledge our local Bunnings stores who, through their barbecue stalls and donations from customers, raised more than \$8,000 for the Premier's flood appeal.

I acknowledge a local small-business person, Rob Gibson. I know that there are many others, but I record his contribution to also recognise the efforts of those who have equally made such a contribution. Rob Gibson, who runs a business, CleanOff High Pressure Service, spent a week helping to clean homes in Queensland that had been affected by the floods. Now, having done that, he is donating 10 per cent of the proceeds from all of the jobs that he completes until the end of March to the flood appeal.

I acknowledge the Penrith City Council, which has offered technical assistance to a number of the Queensland local government authorities. Those authorities are under enormous strain at the moment and are trying to continue to deliver the very basic services that communities affected require. I know that nine of our local SES volunteers have also travelled to flood and cyclone affected areas in Queensland to lend their expertise.

Last Sunday I attended a fundraising relief concert held at the Blacktown Bowman Hall organised by the New South Wales Philippine Community Council. I know many local residents were in attendance at that event and I understand that, in total, approximately \$20,000 was raised at that event. It struck me that many people who were involved in that concert from the local community that were of Filipino background showed a particular empathy having come from a country that faces many of these natural disasters and has done so on a great scale in recent times as well. I acknowledge their contribution as Australians of Filipino background towards the relief effort.

These are just a few examples, and I know that there are so many more in my community, but I wanted to record them to ensure that it is known that our community stands side by side with those other communities who are now seeking to rebuild themselves out of the debris that these natural disasters have left behind.

I thank all of these people and acknowledge the efforts they have contributed in their time, their strength and their money. I know there are also many people in our community who have prayed for those who have been affected by these natural disasters.

Many communities have been wiped out physically by these natural disasters, but the spirit that binds those communities remains. I believe it is out of this spirit that we as a nation, determined to demonstrate our resilience, our compassion and our mateship, will begin the process of helping those in these affected communities to rebuild the infrastructure that they need and to rebuild their communities.